1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

553 *Naming* (*oku luka*). The Ovimbundu name their children with great care. It is important to name a first-born (*uveli*) on the day of its birth, but if the child is evidently weak and not likely to live, they wait a few days. Names are in a sense family property and given over and over again. In naming the baby several factors may be taken into consideration:

1. The name (*onduko*) should have been borne by an ancestor, whether living or dead, whose character and state of well-being are satisfactory.

2. Ordinarily the baby is named by the father from his family unless there should be some reason for not doing so, in which case the name is given by the mother from her family, but if either family has a bad record for deaths or other misfortunes, that may prevent the parents following the custom, for

3. The name must not prejudice but rather assist the child's chance of survival. Thus a child born after the death of several siblings may be given an insignificant name, intended to cause the spirits to overlook it or to consider it as less than human, as, for example, *Katekāvā*, Little-black-thing; *Cīvī*, Bad; *Mbili*, I-do-not-know-it; *Kacinyama*, Little animal; *Kalūsuē*, Nit; *Cilūlū*, Ghost; *Vimbuandu*, Filth; or even *Kaniña*, Little excrement. A child may be given a name never used in the family if extreme measures to prevent its recognition by the spirits are thought necessary.

4. Events or persons prominent at the time of birth may influence the choice. A namesake, whether intentional or not, is known as *Sando* (from the Portuguese *santo* (saint), and the Roman Catholic custom of naming after the saints). Events of the time of birth or its calendric period may be summed up in a proverb or a sentence, a keyword of which is used as the name.[1]

424 5. While names remain in a family, some names may belong to several families. Certain names belong to families predominantly agricultural, others to trading or wealthy families, others to kings' families, &c. Kings' families were especially jealous of their names and commoners were not allowed to use them.

As already explained, parents take the name of their first-born. Should the child die young, the name will not be retained. During illness a person may change his name, taking one calcu-

[1] *Vide* E. L. Ennis, 'Women's names among the Ovimbundu', *African Studies* (Johannesburg), March 1945.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

lated either to cause the spirits to pass him by or to facilitate his cure. In adolescence young people discard the names with which they were born and name themselves (*oku lisapa*) according to their own choice. I have collected the explanations for about two hundred names.

The names of children are used, and that is one reason for choosing them with care, for the name will be heard often by the spirits. It is his superiors and those with whom he has respect-relationships whose names one may not pronounce. A child's name may be affected by whether there are recently deceased siblings, but he is not the reincarnation of such a one. Rather, he may reincarnate an ancestor. This is doubtless one reason for naming him after an ancestor. This, however, is a subject for treatment elsewhere.

The Period of Lying-in (*Ocitete*)[1]

'During lying-in the work of the mother is to cause the cord to fall from the navel of her child. On the navel she rubs castor-bean charcoal mixed with palm oil, or palm oil mixed with ashes, or with the soot from burning a sleeping-mat of reeds. A chicken feather is required from a wing or the tail, to dip it in the soot. That is done day by day until the navel is freed.' It must be noted that although a large percentage of the babies get infected navels, this does not seem to be as serious among the Ovimbundu as with us. 'For the bed of mother and baby are spread leaves that it may be soft, if possible leaves of the *ongonguila* tree. Over the leaves are spread a sleeping-mat (*esisa*) and some little cloths. During that time the mother does not sleep in the dark. The father must bring firewood and firelogs that it may be warm and light in the house, so that if the baby defecates in the night, it may be wiped properly.' No cloths or diapers are used for babies either at this period or later. An additional reason given for having a good fire in the hut is that the baby is supposed to be very much afraid of the dark.

'During those first days the women come to entertain[2] the mother and to hold the baby. Some bring meal and meat, some meal and beans, some porridge and relish, some sour beer and

[1] *Ocitete* seems to be derived from *oku teta*, to cut, in reference to the cutting of the cord.

[2] *Oku poka*, to provide for and entertain, as for a guest.

233 The cattle herd obtains most of its food by grazing, but in the dry season the grass withers. Childs states[1] that "Herding has been a [609] function of the sister's son, and even now there is a reluctance on the part of the boys to herd for their fathers."

235 462 [846] Chickens are owned and looked after by both men and women, but other animals only by men. Boys may have small stock of their own, and a boy's economic independence most frequently begins with his owning a chicken.

231 Hambly states that goats are more common than any other animal, and that every family has one or more. These animals are not fed or watered, but are allowed to wander to find their own sustenance. Goats are not milked. Young males are castrated. The goat is frequently used in sacrifices. Sheep also are allowed to find their own food; the males are not castrated. Pigs are cared for comparatively carefully, receiving water and a daily supply of sweet potatoes and their leaves, together with some corn. Male pigs are castrated.[2]

APICULTURE[3]

[439] Beeswax was an important item of trade in the caravan days, and is still sold to Portuguese traders' stores, where it is massed into large rectangular cakes for export. Honey is eaten alone or with manioc, and [262] a fermented beer called *ochasa* is made by adding honey to corn-beer. [273] Fibre strainers are used for cleaning the wax, and large shallow baskets [252] are employed for drying the honey in the sun.

Large cylindrical hives, which are private property, are placed high in the trees. These are made by removing a cylinder of bark and lashing the halves together with strands of bark, forming a hive which has a diameter of one foot.

In Elende honey is removed from the hives during the months of August and December. One man ascends the tree in order to lower the hive with a long rope of bark or plaited fibre, while beneath the tree men are prepared to take the hive, which is opened over a smoky fire.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

326 782 *Smithing.* The profession of blacksmith or *ocivinda* is an important one, and, like hunting and divining, is sacred and is entered with special ritual. Often, but not always, these three professions are passed on by inheritance. For smithing two years' apprenticeship to a member of the profession is necessary, and is usually entered upon at the age of eighteen. At the end of this period the master examines his pupil, and makes tools for him, especially the heavy hammer or *onjundo* which is regarded as symbolic of his craft. For the inauguration ceremony the boy provides four chickens (2 male, 2 female), a dog, and a goat; the blood of these animals is sprinkled on his tools, and their flesh is eaten at a feast [553] attended by the villagers. Throughout the procedure the boy remains standing on the small anvil. Finally he is asked to choose his professional name; he then steps down from the anvil a qualified blacksmith.

(1) Childs, 1949, p.109. (2) Hambly, op.cit., p.154.
(3) Hambly, (4) 1934.

769 They intimate their wishes to their descendants only through slight illness, usually asking for honour to be paid to them by a feast, or by some descendant carrying on their profession.

Osande is the spirit of the much-honoured founder of the family,(1) and is always beneficent, bringing good fortune and warning his descendants of danger. Hambly and Tucker agree that *Ekisi* is the same kind of spirit as *Osande* (although Hambly does not give *Osande* this special meaning). Tucker writes that *Ekisi* is a benevolent spirit who calls the villagers together at night, and gives them advice through a medium (?), whom he enters without the latter's going into the usual trance. *Kandundu* according to Tucker is an *ekisi* who holds the leading position among the ancestral spirits owing to his seniority. Hambly describes a shrine to *Kandundu* at Bailundu; anyone who sees the contents of the shrine is supposed to become blind. He writes that *Kandundu* is thought of as "the spirit of dreaming who makes swellings on the body", but gives no further explanation. According to Tucker *Kandundu* is an especially powerful *ondele*, and ceremonies performed for him have many distinctive features.

776 769 [778]

Huvi, the spirit of the hunt, has his own shrine and priest in the village of the (paramount?) chief. His hut is very large, since all the meat of the hunts is placed in it. In front of it dances are held, and poles are decorated with skulls and other trophies of hunting. Before the door there is a carved figure of *Samemba*, the spirit who chases the game towards the hunter. A man whose ritual name is *Kapila*, and a woman called *Kuanja*(2) are in charge of the spirit-hut of *Huvi*, and make supplication to him for success in hunting. Hunters living elsewhere but in an *ombala* or head village do not have persons bearing these ritual names, but their dogs are often called *Huvi*, *Samemba*, *Kapila* or *Kuanja*.

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The most dreaded spirits are the *otulopokopoko*, who may be spirits of still-born babies or foetuses, mental defectives, maltreated slaves, or persons, especially children, killed by sorcery. When a person has been found guilty of killing a child by sorcery or witchcraft, he is sentenced to "restore life" to it, which he does by substituting for it a child from his own family: if the deceased child is a girl, he must give an ox as well. The child is treated with great respect by his new family. If however the parents do not ask the sorcerer or witch for restitution, the child becomes an *okalupokopoko*, and may return to "eat" other children, at the command of the sorcerer who has killed it.

RITUAL

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It has been noted that the village headman acts as priest for the *oluse*, the group of paternally-related persons who form the basis of the village group, while the head of the *oluina* acts as priest for his dispersed, maternally-related group.(3) There is little detailed information on the religious duties of these priests. Cushman(4) describes the village headman as making public prayers each morning to Suku. Childs however points out(5) that it is more usual for the headman to spend a

(1) i.e. of either the *oluse* or the *oluina*. (Childs, personal communication)
(2) According to Childs, (1949, p.21) *Kuanja* is a hunting goddess.
(3) See above, p.28.
(4) 1944, p.51. (5) Personal communication.

683 One of the commonest forms of punishment for sorcery was, and still is, banishment. Only the chief could pronounce the death penalty. Charges of sorcery are sometimes brought today to civil courts and to church courts under the guise of "poisoning".(1)

781 776 171 There are obvious gaps in the information on Umbundu religion and magic e.g. on spirits other than those of ancestors; on ritual connected with the ancestors; on productive and protective magic; on the work of the medicine-man as distinct from the diviner, and on the functions of the two separate offices of family priest. From existing accounts, however, Umbundu magico-religious concepts would appear to have much in common with those of the peoples to the east of the Plateau, and many of the words used for these concepts *(ngombo, ahamba, wanga, nganga* e.g.) are in fact the same. These peoples have been described in another section of the Survey.(2)

THE LIFE CYCLE

852 114 Childs' chapters on infancy, childhood, and adolescence form the main part of his book, and his treatment of the subject is much more detailed and on a deeper level than information offered by other writers,(3) and should be consulted.

BIRTH

844 A woman remains in her husband's village for the birth of her children. During the first birth, she is generally assisted by older women of the village, usually relatives of the husband. No man is present unless delayed labour entails the presence of a medical practitioner, or a diviner. Difficult delivery is said to be caused by broken taboos, [845] adultery on the part of the mother, sorcery, or the woman's own refusal to give birth. There is little ceremony connected with childbirth, and a woman may give birth to her second and later children alone when she is [846] in the fields. There is a customary lying-in period until the cord falls from the navel, but this is frequently ignored today.

845 *Twins* are welcomed but are considered prodigies whose birth requires the administrations of an *ocimbanda*.(4) Soon after the birth, and every month while the children are growing, the whole village takes part in a ceremony to preserve their lives. In the case of triplets, one is given to the paramount chief.(5)

553 *Naming* usually takes place, in the case of a first-born, on the day of its birth. Childs notes several factors:

(a) The name *(onduko)* should have been borne by a relative, whether living or dead, whose character and state of well-being are satisfactory; sometimes the child may be considered the re-incarnation of the deceased relative after whom he is named.†

(1) Childs, personal communication. (2) McCulloch, 1951, pp.72-83.
(3) Hambly, (2) 1934, pp.212-33, and Cushman, 1964.
(4) Ennis, 1945. (5) Childs, 1949, p.83.

† [Childs, op. cit., p. 87-]

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relative after whom he is named.(1)

(b) Ordinarily the baby is named by the father from his family. According to Ennis,(2) the first male child is usually named after the paternal grandfather, the first female child after the paternal grandmother; the next two or three children are named after paternal uncles and aunts, and then the mother may choose a name. Childs writes that the name may be given by the mother if the father's family has a bad record of deaths and illnesses. 553

(c) The name must not prejudice but assist the child's chance of survival; thus a child born after the death of several siblings may be given an insignificant name, intended to cause the spirits to overlook it, or to consider it less than human.

(d) Events or persons prominent at the birth may influence the choice. A namesake, whether intentional or not, is known as *Sando* (from the Portuguese word for saint). Events at the time of birth may be summed up in a proverb, of which the key word is the name. Ennis gives numerous examples of such names.(3)

(e) The same names may belong to several families of a type, e.g. trading or farming families, or the families of paramount chiefs, who were jealous of their names and did not permit their use by commoners. 551

Parents take the name of their first-born: thus "Nanjamba" is "the mother of Njamba". During illness a person may change his name to draw away the attention of the spirits. Adolescents discard their birth names and choose new ones.(4)

Infancy

During the first six months the child sleeps with his mother and during the day is carried in a cloth on her back, and fed whenever he demands milk. If the mother has no helper, she works in the fields with the baby on her back. An older sister or other young relative may play with the infant within hearing distance of the mother. 853

Between six and twelve months the child is taught to sit; when he can do this he is no longer a baby *(onana)* but an *ocisembe* (toddler). A child rarely walks before the age of 24 months, since he is carried and held so much. 856

Weaning: a child goes every day with his mother to the fields; each month he becomes fatter and heavier, but he usually continues like this until after the second birthday. When he can walk, he may be left during the day with his young nurse (elder sister, cross-cousin or other relative) and not fed until the mother returns during the afternoon. The process of weaning begins then at this stage but is usually not completed till a year or two later, unless another baby intervenes. Those who take longer than usual in weaning may, however, be frightened away from the breast.(5) 862

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.87.
(2) 1945.
(3) op.cit.
(4) Childs, loc.cit.
(5) Childs, op.cit., p.93.

608 sometimes made between husband and wife, at night and in secret. People say that those who exchange blood will die at the same time.

NAMING

553 551 In addition to the words chosen to describe twins, there are some points of importance in connection with the naming of children. The father and mother change their names when the first child, male or female, is born, but there is no change of name at the birth of subsequent children. In a certain family the name of the first child, a girl, was Vitundo. The name of her father, which was Cingandu, was abandoned; he became Savitundo, "the father of Vitundo." The mother's name of Visolela was changed to Navitundo, "the mother of Vitundo."

If the first child dies, the parents dislike their names; they therefore revert to their original names. When another baby is born, the parents again change their names in the way described. A posthumous child is called Lusati. A child born after twins is Kasinda, which means "to push." Twins are called the Lion and the Elephant, or the Elephant and the Hippopotamus. There are no secret names. The names of the dead must not be mentioned; the deceased is referred to as "the one who has gone." Children may change their own names at the age of about sixteen years, and actually do so if their names are distasteful to them. Ngonga's friend, named Katito ("little"), changed his name to Mukayita (meaning not known). Ngonga's sister, named Ndumbila (meaning not known), changed her name to Cilingohenda, which means "It is a pity." I met a chief near Bailundu who was called Kandimba, meaning "the Little Hare."

There may be a change of name during sickness. A man now named Katahali suffered sickness in addition to other misfortunes. His sickness recurred, so he changed his name from Kopiongo to Katahali. The meaning of the former name is not known. The new name, Ka tala ohali, means "He who has seen trouble"; Katahali is an abbreviation. Another instance of change of name, also in the village of Cilembo, was that of a man who changed his name from Lumingu to Kaihemba, which means "the one who lives by medicine"; because without medicine he would have died. A sick child may receive a bad name, for instance, the name Pig. If one or more children have died a subsequent child receives an ugly name with a bad meaning. There is no totemism, but children may be named after animals. A girl is sometimes named Kambund[illegible] little frog"). Other names for females are Esenje ("the rock where corn

2: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

is pounded") and Cisengu ("a small bird with a long tail"). A boy may be Kangwe ("the little leopard").

Names sometimes give an indication of descent. Ngonga's full name is Ngonga Kalei Liahuka, Ngonga ("eagle"), Kalei ("one who works for the king"), Liahuka (the father's surname). Ngonga's sister is Cinyañala ("the old basket"). This was the name of her father's father's sister. As the father of Cinyañala is Liahuka, the daughter is surnamed Yaliahuka (*ya*, "of"). The father chooses the names of the three first children whether boys or girls. The mother chooses the name of the fourth child whether male or female. If the child is a boy, the mother probably chooses the name of her brother or of her father's brother. When a first son is born, the father usually gives the name of his father; for example, Ngonga's father's father was Ngonga. If the first baby is a girl the father chooses the name of his sister. Ages are not known, but reckoning of age goes back five years by counting the number of times maize has been sown; maize is planted each October. The period from sowing to sowing is *ulima*.

If a man has a child by a woman who is not a wife or a concubine, the woman keeps the child for eight or ten years. The man must give the mother a cloth in which to carry her illegitimate baby, also oil for her hair. Sometimes the girl will go to the father of her child to be his concubine, but her parents will not let her do so if he has a bad reputation. To bear a child out of wedlock is a disgrace.

TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP

In preparing the following tables Ngonga was the ego, or, male speaker, and each term is given in relation to himself, with its reciprocal. The tables give firstly Ngonga's own generation, then his ascendants, and finally some of his descendants. Tables E and F are diagrammatic forms of tables A–D.

TABLE A

(See Table E III)

NGONGA'S OWN GENERATION

Terms in italics are Umbundu names either for persons or for kindred classes. Reciprocals are placed in brackets; W.S. means, "woman speaking."

Ukai wange is my wife; *ukatu*, which means "spouse," is a modern form of address for husbands and wives when speaking to each other (*weyange*, my husband).

Kota or *huse* is my elder brother (*mume wange* or *manja*, younger brother).

Kota or *husange* is my elder sister. An elder brother speaking to his sister calls her by name, or he uses the term *mbuale*. When speaking of her he says *mukai wange* (*mume wange* or *manjange*, younger brother). The same terms are used in the same way to apply to my father's brother's son, and my

881 292 During the period of isolation costumes for the dance are made. These consist of clothing of tightly fitting, coarse netting, masks, and girdles which are for the use of only those boys who have been circumcised. The feasts and dances celebrating the conclusion of initiatory rites are of great importance. Women are not supposed to know that the operation of circumcision is taking place, and they are taught that *ovinganji* are supernatural beings who have sprung up from the earth; therefore every effort is made to conceal masks and costumes from the sight of women and the uninitiated. No female is allowed to go near the enclosure where novices are confined.

881 A few days after observing the costumes and dances of the newly initiated boys at Katoko I was in the Ngalangi region at the village of Ngongo, about a hundred miles to the north of Katoko. At Ngalangi two boys of the Ovimbundu were questioned with regard to their experiences in the initiation camp.

It is certain that initiation ceremonies are held at irregular intervals and not more frequently than once in four years. The name given to the ceremonies for boys in the Ngalangi area is *ocinganji* (*oci*, "big"; *nganji*, "judge," or a masked person). When there is a number of boys who have not been circumcised, these approach the oldest men to ask for a circumcision ceremony. The old men visit the *sekulu* ("headman") of the village to request that arrangements shall be made. An *ocimbanda* ("medicine-man"), assisted by other men, prepares a camp in a wooded area. Usually the father of each boy has to arrange that a tutor shall accompany his son to the camp, but sometimes as many as three boys have the same guardian. The guardian receives a small fee, possibly nothing more valuable than a chicken.

The camp is made on the side of a stream remote from the village. Each boy takes a chicken to the camp for the purpose of making a special meal, which is given at the name-changing ceremony which follows initiation. The chicken is eaten soon after the boy has been circumcised. The boy changes his own name for a new one which is announced in the village from which he came. While circumcision is in progress the enclosure is surrounded by male drummers and men who shout, so that any noise made by the boys during circumcision will not be heard.

The period spent in camp is uncertain, probably from three to six months. The rule is that camp is not disbanded until every boy is healed; which means that the confinement may be greatly

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

326 merly obtained. Blacksmiths now smelt scrap-iron from European sources.
[582] Among the Ovimbundu, blacksmiths are restricted in marriage only by those kinship laws arising from their classificatory system of relationships, and the operation of a system of cross-cousin marriage. The smiths are not an endogamous group, and the occupation is not hereditary.

But despite these differences, which are not quite in harmony with the general body of custom relating to Negro blacksmiths, the Ovimbundu preserve ritual which is part of a widely distributed attitude toward workers in iron.

When a boy begins his training he should be about eighteen years of age and physically robust. He is required to collect and soften fragments of iron in the charcoal fire, to work the bellows, and to beat iron on the anvil, but for a time he is not allowed to make implements, the chief of which are hoe blades and axe heads. At the end of two years the novice asks his master to examine him, and preparations are made for an inauguration ceremony should the youth have proved sufficiently skilled to become an independent blacksmith.

326 On the day of initiation the boy has to buy four chickens, two male and
782 two female, one pup, and a goat. The master blacksmith has already made a complete set of tools for presentation to his pupil, but the big hammer (onjundo) is not quite completed until the day of initiation. While the final touches are being given to this object the novice stands still on a small stone anvil which is situated between the forge and the large anvil.

When the hammer is completed, and while it is still red hot, it is thrust into the belly of the pup provided by the novice. The goat and the four chickens are killed and some of their blood is sprinkled over the new tools which are gathered in a heap. The blacksmiths invite their friends to feast on the flesh of the sacrificed animals.

326 The boy remains standing on the anvil[1] until the master says, "You may
●553 speak and tell us what name you want." Perhaps the boy says, "I am Ndumbu;" then the people clap hands and trill with their fingers in their open mouths. My interpreter said, "The boy will work hard and people will pay him. He used to work hard but his master took the pay."

326 Near the large anvil may be seen one or more wooden figures which are
778 still regarded as essential to the work of the blacksmith. I was informed that a blacksmith owes his skill to the aid of a spirit of some person he has killed, and that this spirit uses the wooden figure as a dwelling place. If this information is reliable the wooden figure is of the nature of a shrine, but I was not able to learn of any ceremony for inducing a spirit into the wooden figure. The impression left was that the spirit of the murdered person re-

[1] [i.e., on the day of initiation of apprentice blacksmith. -- Analyst]